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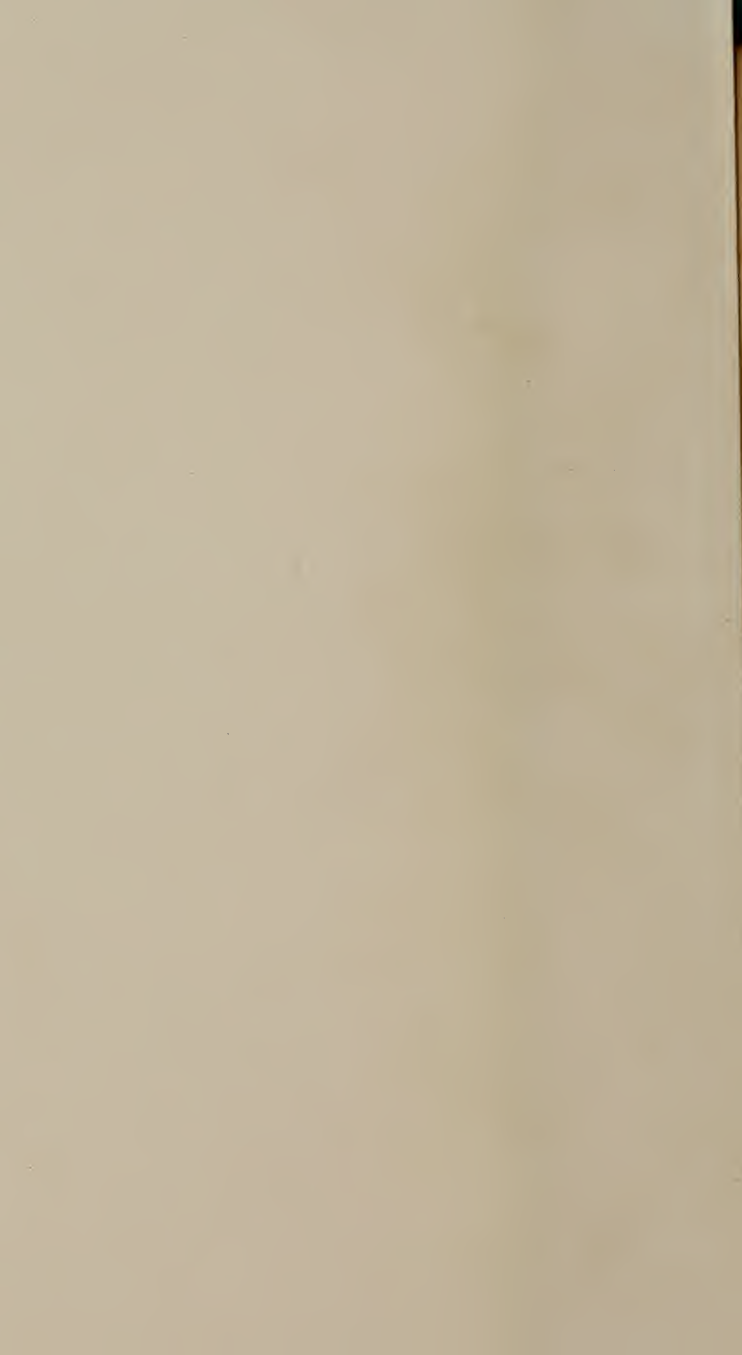
FROM

Rev. R. K. Rodgers, D. D.

Received

Nov. 1874.





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*Our Duty and Interest inseparable.*

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A

S E R M O N

Preached to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

*SALTERS-HALL,*

*On Monday, July 2. 1733.*

---

By JOHN PARTINGTON, M. A.

---

*And now made Publick at their Request.*

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L O N D O N ;

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O. D. ...

S E R M O N

S O C I E T I E S

Religion ...

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A  
S E R M O N  
F O R  
R E F O R M A T I O N O F M A N N E R S.

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Matth. x. 32.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me  
before Men, him will I confess also  
before my Father which is in Hea-  
ven.*

**T**HE Work of Reformation is so good a Work in itself, and attended with so many Advantages to Mankind; whether separately considered, or as united in Societies greater and less: that to recommend it, one would think, there should be little Occasion, and to apologize for it none.

INDEED there would be none, were it not that some Men have endeavour'd to confound all Distinction between Virtue and Vice, and will allow no Difference between them, tho' there be the most obvious one, unless it be to give Vice the preference, and to think it, of the two, the most eligible. Amongst this unhappy Number are too many of our Fellow-Christians; Persons that bear the Christian Name, however unworthy of it, who are become Patrons of Wickedness, and are neither ashamed to practise nor defend it.

Now this it is, that makes a Vindication of the Truths and Ways of Religion necessary; the many, I mean, that oppose and run them down: some as is pretended out of Principle, others by their Practice. And should engage all who profess to have the Redeemer's Interest at heart, to do every thing in their power to encourage and promote it. And blessed be God, we want not for Encouragements the fullest and most satisfactory that can be given to a Work of this kind. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which with so much reason we look upon and value as a Revelation from God to us, is richly stor'd with Motives to a Life of useful and undissembled Piety. Nay, these Encouragements spread through the whole Bible in a manner, that wheresoever we  
cast



cast our Eye, we might meet with an inviting Charm to Goodness and Virtue.

WHAT a powerful Argument is there in the Text, to own the Cause of Christ ourselves, and to stand up for and plead it with others? *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven.*

THIS Chapter contains our blessed Saviour's Instructions to his twelve Disciples, when he first sent them into the World to preach and publish his Gospel. From the first Verse to the sixteenth, we have an account of their Power, and Authority, the Places wherein, and the Manner how it was to be exercised: after these Regulations come the grounds of their Encouragement in the faithful Discharge of their Office, from the sixteenth Verse to the fortieth: Then follow the Promises to such as should give their Message a welcome Entertainment, to the end of the Chapter.

THE Text is one of those Arguments which our Saviour makes use of to encourage his Disciples first, his Ministers after them, and all his sincere Followers in the different Successions of time, to a steady Adherence to him, and open Acknowledgment of him before the World. And we may observe the Argument made use of to persuade to this, is taken from a very moving Topick, that I mean, of Advantage. The whole

whole is as if Christ had said; It's true, this is likely to prove a very hazardous Business: the Errand I am sending you out into the World upon, will, I certainly foresee, expose you to considerable Difficulties and Dangers: but be of good heart, take courage, for I who have the Rewards of another World at my dispose, as well as those of this; I assure you, that whatever you suffer for my sake and the Gospel's at present, you shall be unspeakable Gainers at the last. In the Words, these two Things are observable.

A Duty enjoined, with a proper Motive rightly to perform it. The Duty is that of confessing Christ Jesus; a Duty in which we are all very nearly concerned: tho' such as are eminently qualified for it, either by the Excellency of their Gifts, or the Advantage of their Station in Church or State; have greater Obligations lying upon them to a Profession of Religion in a more noted way, than others of meaner Gifts and a lower Rank. Magistrates, and Ministers, and Men of great Quality, and great Estates, whose Circumstances of Fortune allow them to make some Figure in the World, and whose Influence over others must for this reason be the more extensive, have a special Opportunity above the lower Sort of private Christians, of honouring God and his Son Jesus, in those  
higher

higher Stations in which divine Providence hath set them. Riches even without Places of Authority, carry a kind of Authority along with them ; as God therefore hath set your Candle in an higher Place than that of others, so you should be careful that it may shine the brighter. *Your Light should so shine before Men, as that they may see your good Works,* and hereby be induced to glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Oh how lovely a Sight is it to behold Greatness and Goodness in conjunction ! and what a pity is it, such a Sight is not much more common ?

Matt. v. 16.

THERE is not, however, the meanest Christian that is exempted from this Duty. No, not those whose Capacities are weak, whose Learning is small, and who with great difficulty, which is the Case with many of the poorer Sort, make their passage thro' an unequally divided World. Every Child of God must be one of his Witnesses : and bear Testimony for him against the Impieties of the Times in which he lives. And the worse the Age, or Place is, where his Lot is cast, the more vigorously should he exert himself against the Vices that most prevail : Like Stars, we should shine the brightest in the darkest Night. And when our Station, or Circumstances in Life, will not permit us to do so much for God as some

some

some others, we are to do what we can, and that shall be accepted.

THE Words are general, and tho' spoken more immediately to the twelve Disciples, yet seem not confined to them. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, i. e.* shall sincerely own me to be the true *Messias*, the Son of God, and the Saviour of Mankind; and shall acknowledge in the face of an unbelieving degenerate World, my Truths and Cause, my Ways and Servants; *Him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven.* This Man will I own, by declaring and approving this Action of his, and the Person for it, before my Father; and by rewarding him amply in the presence of his holy Angels, and before all the World at the last and great Day. This is the Encouragement which our Saviour here gives, and what greater can be given, to a sincere and open Confession of him? If to be sure of an Interest, in his Favour, if to have his Countenance and Protection, if to be dear to him now, to have the honour of a publick Acknowledgment from him at the Judgment-Day, and to be happy with him for ever; will not prevail with us to believe in him, to live to him, and to stand up for him against all opposing Powers; what will? It's much to be feared, all other Arguments will lose their Force upon us, and prove ineffectual.

THERE

THERE is nevertheless a very powerful one in the words next following the Text :  
*But whosoever shall deny me before Men,* Matth. x. i. e. shall either disbelieve in me, or turn 33. his back upon me and my Religion, upon any pretence whatsoever : or if he call himself a Christian, yet by a Life and Conversation the very reverse of what my Gospel requires, makes it evident that he is no genuine Disciple of mine : I will be so far from owning him under that Character, that I will utterly disclaim all Relation to him as a Saviour : and when I come to call the World to its last reckoning, *will deny him before my Father,* and instead of saying unto him, well done good and faithful Servant, and bidding him enter into his Master's Joy ; I will bid him depart out of my Presence, and send him down into the Lake, that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, to be a Companion for Devils, and other wicked Men like himself : where his unwarrantable Unbelief, his base Cowardise, and unrepented of Wickedness shall meet with a Punishment such as they deserve.

HAVING thus briefly explain'd the Words : what I propose further to say to you from them, shall be in this Method.

I. I would shew you more fully what it is to confess Jesus Christ before Men.

*A SERMON to the Societies*

II. IN how many Ways this may, and ought to be done.

III. I shall enforce the Duty, with all the Advantage the Text gives.

THIS done, some suitable Improvement shall conclude the whole. I am,

I. To shew you more fully what it is to confess Christ Jesus before Men. It is neither more nor less than this, to let the World know that we are Christians; which can be done in no other way, but by believing the Gospel, and living as near as we can agreeable to the Holy Rules and Precepts therein laid down. Or in other Words, you may take it more largely thus: To confess Christ before Men, is openly and ingenuously to declare to others that we believe him to be the true *Messias*, the only begotten Son of the Father, given by him for the Salvation of all, that should accept him as their Saviour, and obey him as their Lord: that he is to this end furnished with Ability and Authority sufficient *to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him*: and that we, for our parts, let others do as they please, receive and subject ourselves to him as such, resolving in an humble Dependance upon divine Aids to be ruled and saved by him, and by no other, whatever the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, may say and do to the contrary.

Heb. vii.  
25.

THE Duty of confessing Christ is here opposed to denying him, as appears from the following Verſe. To prevent which, we are carefully to watch againſt thoſe two Affections of the Mind, the Paſſions I mean of Fear and Shame; which are apt to have ſo great an Influence over Men in the Conduct of their Lives. Theſe, when regulated in a proper manner, are very uſeful and powerful Principles, and both concur to ſecure a Chriſtian in the way of his Duty. But if either of theſe Affections becomes irregular and degenerate, it very much retards the Soul in the ways of God, and is the Cauſe of many foul Miſcarriages. The greateſt Danger ariſes from the Paſſion of Fear: when once that is perverted, and becomes inordinate, it ſometimes occaſions Men to deſert their former Profeſſion and Practice, and to turn aſide into crooked Paths; which is highly provoking to God, and cauſes him to treat thoſe who formerly ſeemed to be his Friends, as Workers of Iniquity. Let this then be obſerv'd,

A true Confefſor will not deny his Saviour thro' fear: it's neither the Scoffs nor Frowns of others, neither the Fierceneſs of thoſe that would gladly ſuppreſs the Truth, nor the Frowardneſs of the leſs malicious, who neglect and deride it, that makes him afraid. Tho' Men and Devils ſhould combine againſt him, the Kings of the Earth ſet

themselves, and the Rulers take Counsel together how to silence or punish him; he will not desist from the Profession of the Truth, much less renounce it. Such an one was *Luther*, who when his Friends warned him of his Danger, if he went to *Worms*, and earnestly dissuaded him from going; said, if there were as many Devils as Tiles there, he would not fail to go. Our Saviour we read *witnessed a good Confession* before Pontius Pilate. He was not afraid to let the World know who he was, and what was the kind Errand he came into it upon. St. *Paul*, when arraigned at the Bar of *Felix*, and falsely accused there, after he had cleared himself from the first part of his Charge, which was Seditious; says, with a Courage becoming himself, and the Cause in which he was engaged, the Cause of Christ and Religion, the best certainly in all the World; *But this I confess unto thee*, addressing himself to the chief Magistrate, *that after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and Prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow*, meaning his Accusers, *that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein, or consequent upon such a Belief as I have now mentioned, do I exercise my self to have*

1 Tim. vi.  
18.

Acts xxiv.  
14, &c.



have always a Conscience void of Offence, toward God, and toward Men. The Apostle Peter once indeed denied his Lord thro' Fear. But it was in very discouraging Circumstances he did it; and at a time when he was not so fully satisfy'd of his being the true *Messias*, as he was a little after. And it should be remembred, this his Weakness and Denial cost him a very severe Repentance, and that afterwards he became one of his boldest Confessors, not thinking Life itself too dear to part with for his Saviour. The Apostles owned Christ before Kings and Councils, and the greatest Appearances; at *Jerusalem*, at *Antioch*, at *Athens*, and at *Rome*: sometimes before Men of great Learning and Gravity, and at other times before the most cruel and bloody Persecutors, being nothing terrified by their Adversaries. The false-hearted Professor is soon daunted, when a Storm arises, and Dangers threaten: but he that has the Interest of Religion truly at heart, is rather heightned in his Courage than dispirited by the Rage and Malice of wicked Men. He sees there is the more occasion for him to shew his good liking to the ways of God, when so many vilify and oppose them. It is observed of St. *Paul*, that brave Christian Hero, that the more opposition he met with from the Enemies of Christianity,

the

Acts ix. 23. *the more he encreased in Strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

AND if Fear cannot enjoin the true Christian silence, much less shall Shame do it; That being by far the weaker Temptation of the two, it is far more inexcusable to yield to it. *I will speak of thy Testimonies before Kings, says the Psalmist, and will not be ashamed:* and *Timothy* had this Charge given him; *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord.* As to the Person of Christ, *tho' he appeared in the Form of a Servant, and his Visage was more marred than any Man, and his Form more than the Sons of Men:* the true Christian is not ashamed to own him under that very recommending Character, as God his Saviour. Neither is he ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; tho' some of its Doctrines are contrary to the corrupt Reasonings of carnal Men, and to the received Traditions and Customs of this vain World, and directly opposite to the Inclinations and Interests of the Flesh. Tho' the Religion of Jesus *was to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and to the Gentiles Foolishness,* yet says *St. Paul, I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* So far was this great Apostle from being ashamed of the Christian Dispensation, that

Pf. cxix.  
46.

2 Tim. i.  
8.

Isaiah lii.  
14.

Rom. i.  
16.

that he gloried in it, as the clearest and best this lower World was ever favour'd with. Nor is the true Christian ashamed of the Ways of Christ, and the Worship which he has prescribed: as Prayer, reading and hearing the Word, attending upon Sacraments, and living well. But is heartily glad of all Opportunities, especially Lord's-day Opportunities, of engaging in the Duties of Religion, and of Assistance to discharge them in a proper manner. *Let none that wait on thee, says David, be ashamed:* no, they have no reason to be so. *But let them be* Pfal. xxv. *ashamed, which transgress without cause.* <sup>3.</sup> Let the profane and ungodly Wretches be ashamed of their impudent Wickedness and Follies: Let the Formalist blush when he thinks of his lifeless Profession: Let those who speak and act against Religion, and bid defiance to every thing that is sacred, be ashamed. But as for others, who are active in the Ways of God, this is not their shame, but their glory. Nor is the sincere Christian ashamed of his Fellow-Confessors, who own this Christ, and therefore hold these Doctrines, and practise these Duties. Be the Time and Place in which he lives never so bad; it does not abash him, that the World and Mammon have such Crouds of Votaries paying devotion to their Shrines, whilst Christ hath but comparatively a few sincere Followers. He is ashamed of the World's Wicked-

Wickedness, but he values a good Christian the more, and not the less, because there are but few like him. If he be a poor Man, yet if he be a true Servant of Jesus Christ, he loves him much. He hath indeed a more than ordinary value for a rich useful good Man, upon many accounts; this is the Man of his right hand: but it does not humble him, that many of Christ's Followers are poorly provided for as to this World. Of nothing is he ashamed of in them, but their sinful Weaknesses and Infirmities.

AND as the true Confessor will not deny Christ thro' Fear nor Shame, at least will not ordinarily do it; so I now add, neither will he do it for the sake of any Advantages arising to him from this Earth. The World indeed has proved too powerful a Temptation for some Professors of Religion to withstand: and they have rather chosen to give up all Interest in Christ Jesus, than part with any considerable Portion of it for him. Demas *hath forsaken me, says St. Paul, having loved this present World.* He preferred his Riches to his God, his Interest on Earth, to his Happiness in Heaven. But good Men have a very different Turn of Mind: the Honours, the Profits, and the Pleasures of this World have in a good measure lost their Influence over them. They admire and value something more than these, crying out with *Peter, whither should*

2 Tim. iv.  
10.

we go, Lord, but unto thee? thou hast the Words of eternal Life. They find a much greater Satisfaction in the Ways, and amongst the Servants of Christ, than they can find any where else. They prefer an Interest in their Saviour to all other Interests; and as God hath prospered them in the World, will use their Wealth and Power and Influence for him, *counting all things but loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord.*

HAVING now shewn you what it is to confess Christ before Men, I proceed to the second general Head of Discourse; which is to show you,

II. IN how many Ways this may and ought to be done. To which I answer: so many ways as there are of making known to others our Belief of the Doctrine; and Obedience to the Authority and Commands of Christ; so many ways there are of confessing him. There are two ways more especially of doing it: the one by our Words, the other by our Actions.

I. WE are to confess Christ by our Words. *For with the Heart, Man believeth unto Righteousness; and with the Mouth, Confession is made unto Salvation.* Such was St. Peter's Confession, *And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* This confessing of Christ by words, implies more than a bare owning

Rom. 2.

10.

Matt. xvi.

16.

his Truths and Ways; namely, a defending them, as our Capacities vary, against all Gain-sayers. We should stand up for the Truths of the Gospel against every Opposer, and by all prudent, charitable, good-natur'd Methods, take pains to inform their Judgments better: and the rather should we do this, because an erroneous Judgment must have in many Cases an ill Influence upon the Practice. And as for such Persons, as are not only out of the way of Truth, but of Righteousness too, Persons of bad Principles and bad Morals; so far as any thing we can say is likely to have a good Effect, our best Endeavours should not be wanting to reclaim them. To this end, we are to represent to them the Odiousness of Sin, the Beauty, the Excellency and Necessity of Religion, and to convince them if possible, that to be religious is to be wise. We are to set before them a State of Rewards or Retributions, that is yet future; and to shew them, that as they demean themselves here, they must be disposed of for ever after Death. Bid them think of a Judgment to come, and of the many awful Circumstances that will attend the great Day: and ask them where the Course of Life in which they are engaged will end, and how? And desire them to consider whether for any the greatest Pleasures Sin can afford them, it's worth their while to be always unhappy. Make them sensible, that tho' their Case be a bad one,

one, it is not yet hopeless; tho' they may soon make it so, by dropping into Hell, or sinning till they are quite forsaken of the Spirit of God. Shew them that God is reconciling the World unto himself by Jesus Christ, and has Mercy in store for the vilest Offenders, provided they become true Penitents. *Let the wicked forsake his way,* Isaiah lv. *and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts,* <sup>7.</sup> *and let him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* God has pardoned innumerable Sinners already, and some of the worst sort, and he is as ready to forgive as ever: but as ever any hope for Mercy at his hands, let them not expect it without Repentance and Amendment of Life. *Repent,* says the Prophet, *and turn* Ezek. *yourselves from all your Transgressions, so* xviii. 30. *Iniquity shall not be your Ruin:* a plain Intimation, that if we repent not, Iniquity will be our Ruin most inevitably. Who can tell but by these and such like Arguments, we may, thro' the divine Blessing accompanying them, be the happy Instruments of turning Sinners from the Error of their Ways? And can we do too much to save a Soul from Death, and to hide and prevent a Multitude of Sins? This we are to endeavour, as we would not betray the Cause of Christ, desert his Truth, and become the Denyers of it in his Account.

2. ANOTHER way in which we are to confess Christ, is by our Actions. It is not barely saying a great deal for him, and saying it well, that will much avail us. It is not calling Christ, Lord, Lord, that will gain us Admission into his Favour here, or into eternal Glory hereafter. No, He himself hath said; *Not every one that calleth me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: who then is the happy Man that shall have a place there? *Why, he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* An outward Profession always ought in due place to accompany the inward real Holiness of the Heart, and will do so: but we must take heed of confounding these two, in their own Natures so vastly different. They do wickedly and unreasonably, who blame Christians for making a Profession of Godliness; but those who are satisfied with a meer external Profession, will find themselves no less miserably mistaken. Oh how easy a thing were it to be a Christian, if this were all, to own Jesus Christ for my Lord and Saviour in Words, when my Heart denieth him, and will have none of him? To perform a few customary Services to him, which are most open to the View of Men, when I have no inward spiritual Delight in him, nor in his Service?—Nay, how easy were it to profess, as the Papists do, a more strict and severe way of living, than what Christ himself hath taught or commanded,

Matth. vii.

31.

and



and at the same time to keep the Lusts of our Hearts unmortify'd? *Satan* will let you go thus far, and give you little or no disturbance; nay, perhaps encourage you in it, and make you think yourselves secure enough in this Condition. But assure yourselves, to be a true Christian, is more than all this amounts to. Religion is our likeness to God: we are therefore to see to it, that the Temper of our Minds be right in his sight, and this we are to evidence by the Actions of Life: which are more infallible Signs of our Thoughts than the best composed Speeches, and often speak the Truth when Words are only meant to deceive. The practical Christian is certainly the only Man that makes a Profession of Religion to any good purpose. I have somewhere read of a Philosopher that denied there was such a thing as Motion, till another silenced his wrangling by walking cross the Room: a practical Answer is clearly the best. If we are true Christians, and would have the World think us such, we must let them see it, by leading Lives becoming the Gospel. We cannot give a better Evidence, nor indeed any other so good, of our high Esteem and thorough Approbation of the Religion we profess, and of our Subjection to the Authority that established it, than by conforming ourselves to the holy Rules and Precepts therein laid down.

## *A SERMON to the Societies*

IT is a strong Proof of our Loyalty to our Prince, if we are careful to observe and obey all his Laws. This shews that we acknowledge his Sovereignty and Jurisdiction over us, and that we have devoted ourselves to his Service. And if a Man should make never so many formal Protestations of his Loyalty and Fealty to his Sovereign, and in the mean time run on in a Course of Rebellion against him, and be guilty of one Treason after another, till there was scarce left a Crime to make him blacker; he would justly be proceeded against as a Rebel and a Traitor, and would meet with no Favour at all for his earnest Protestations of Innocency and Loyalty: because his seditious Practices manifest the Vanity of such Pretensions. So Mens professed Devotedness to Christ, if they act contrary to their Profession, does but render their Disservice the greater, and their Persons more odious and vile before God, and all good Men.

BUT there are certain Seasons, wherein it will not be sufficient for a Subject quietly to perform the common Duties which his Relation to his Prince obliges him to: but he must moreover express his Fidelity by such Speeches and Actions extraordinary, as the present Exigence of Affairs requires. Sometimes he must declare against the Intrusions of Usurpers, that invade the Rights of his Prince: and must at other times act vigorously

vigorously for the Preservation or Restoration of his Dominions.

AND thus it is with the Subjects of Christ Jesus. A Strain of serious Piety should run thro' the whole Life of a Christian, and every thing he does should be a fresh Proof that he is one. But there are some Duties wherein this Profession should be more explicate, and which when discharged in a proper manner, will give a more full and express Testimony to Religion. These are such as follow.

1. A refusing to comply with the Vices of the Times in which we live, and using all our Interest to oppose them. When Iniquity flows in upon us as a Flood, and Immoralities of all kinds abound, it's high time to lift up the Standard against them, to try what can be done to stem the overflowing Tide, and to prevent the threatening Danger, the impending Ruin. How very daring is Vice? What dreadful Abominations are there in the midst of us? Some, that even Heathens themselves would be ashamed to be guilty of; and yet Christians blush not to commit. Let me mention a few that properly come under this Day's Notice.

I begin with profane Swearing: how shocking is this Sin, yet how common amongst all Ranks of Men, especially the lower Sort? The Name, the glorious and fearful Name, the Lord our God, which should never be mentioned but with all possible

possible Reverence and Regard, is treated with that Levity and Wantonness, with that Boldness and Impudence, as would be dishonourable to an earthly Majesty, or even to a meaner Magistrate. An Oath is an Appeal to God, concerning the Truth of what we say, as the Patron of Truth, and the Avenger of a Lye, and an imprecating his Wrath in case we wilfully deliver a false Testimony. So sacred is an Oath, that it is not to be given, but where there is a just Call to it; and when given, it should be done with the utmost Solemnity. Now this cannot be pleaded for Swearing in our ordinary Conversation: there's no Necessity for it. Nay, what makes this Sin the more audacious and provoking, is, that there is no Profit, no Pleasure, no Honour attends it: it is sinning for sinning sake, and just as if a Man should purposely go out of his way to affront Almighty God. This is a Sin, which directly dishonours God: a Sin which involves the Person that is chargeable with it, in abundance of guilt before God; and it renders him vile and contemptible, and justly so, to all good Men, let his Accomplishments otherwise be never so considerable: and with respect unto most, it weakens his Credit as to his Veracity. In regard to others, this Sin hath its very bad Effects. It is apt to spread its Contagion, and to infect all that are not well armed against it. How easily do even Children learn to swear

swear when their Parents or others set them the bad Example? What is more, when this Sin grows common, it is a very high national Provocation: It strikes at the very Foundations of all good Order amongst Men, and looks as if Religion was leaving a Country. Religion is the great Support and Stay of Society; now this Sin openly defies and denies all Religion. An Oath solemnly taken upon just Occasions is many times the dernier Resort, the last Refuge against Injustice: But there cannot be contrived a more effectual Way to lessen Mens Reverence for this great Instrument of Society, than to apply it loosely and rudely to Things mean and trivial, or to use it upon no occasion at all, but to abuse it.

SINCE then the Sin of profane Swearing so much dishonours God, is so very prejudicial to those who are guilty of it, and looks with so pernicious an Aspect upon Society: it may with the highest Reason be expected from us, that we carefully avoid it ourselves, and discourage it in others. Can we do too much to prevent the spreading Evil? It ill, methinks, becomes the Man, and worse the Gentleman, and worst of all the Christian, in this profane manner to abuse those two excellent Gifts, whereby his Creator hath made him to excel, and distinguished him from the Creatures below him. His Capacity, I mean, of knowing God, and his Faculty of Speech. Oh how

much better were it for many Men, if like Brutes they wanted a Faculty to conceive of God, and a Tongue to speak of him, than that instead of exalting him, they should thus rudely toss his Name in their unhal- lowed Lips! That is a posing Question, which I would desire the common Swearer to ask himself, what he means by praying se- veral times the same Day, *Hallowed be thy Name*, and in the next Company he comes thus intolerably defiles it? What is this but a Mockery of God, and downright Hypo- crisy? Have we not reason to wonder at the Patience of God, that suffers such Wretches to live, were it not, I was going to say, the greater Wonder of the two, there should be a Wretch so vile?

THERE are other Sins besides, that I have been exposing, which we should bear our Testimony against. As the Neglect and open Contempt of the Lord's Day, which God hath mercifully set apart as a Day of Rest to the Body, and of Improvement to the Mind. This is by too many made a Day of Business, of Recreation, and Pleasure: if not of sinful Pleasures, which I fear is often the Case, yet of such Pleasures, which tho' not sinful in themselves, and on other Days, yet are by no means to be justified on this. Instead of spending the chief Part of it in the private and publick Exercises of Devotion, too many spend it in Revellings and Drunkenness, in Debaucheries and Ex- cesses.

cesses. Some Persons have observed, that there is more Wickedness committed on this Day, than on any other Day in the Week, and I wish there be not a great deal of Truth in the melancholly Observation.

DRUNKENNESS is another Sin, which I would not pass by without a Remark or two upon it. A Sin of a very pernicious Nature in itself, and dreadful many times in its Consequences: As it injures a Man in his Health, breaks in upon a good Constitution, often prejudices, if not ruins his Estate and Family, and exposes him to many other Vices; as Fornication, Adultery, Incest, Swearing, Cursing, Gaming, Revenge, nay, and Murder itself. What mischief may not that Man do, who has lost the use of his Reason? and who can think himself safe in his Company, who neither knows, nor cares what he does? How does the intemperate Debauchee unman himself, and degrade his noble Faculties in the use of those good Creatures, which he ought to receive and use with Moderation and Thanksgiving? how ungrateful is he to his God? how unkind to himself, to his Family, and to his Friends? how unworthy, if rich, to have the Blessings of Providence continued? and if poor, of other Mens Liberality and Bounty? A Person commonly addicted to this Sin, especially if a Magistrate or a Minister, destroys hereby his Usefulness in Life, and does more hurt

to Religion by his Example, than he is ever like to do good by his other Influence. Let those who are thus guilty, consider the Character which this Sin bears in Scripture, the Company it is joined with, and the Threatnings denounced against it there.

1 Cor. vi  
9, 10.

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God.*

THE Sin I shall last mention, tho' not the least odious, is that of Uncleanness: by which so many thousands of both Sexes, in and about this great City, have ruin'd their Bodies, and it's greatly to be feared, undone their Souls. Very worthy Endeavours have been used formerly, and of late, for the Suppression of this Immorality, both by Magistrates and others, for which Thanks are justly due to them from the Publick: and they have heartily mine; and it's very much to be wish'd and hoped their laudable Example may be followed by others of the worshipful Bench, and that Encouragement will be given for the further Discovery of Night-houses, those Schools of Debauchery, and Seminaries of this, and of all other kinds of Wickedness: and for the preventing loose and disorderly Persons walking  
the



the Streets at unseasonable Hours, and taking those indecent and criminal Liberties, which they but too commonly do. And the rather is this to be hoped for and expected, because not only the Religion which we profess, but the Laws of our Country give a Sanction to such Proceedings against Offenders of this Sort, and the Good of Neighbourhoods; nay, the Peace, the Safety, and Tranquillity of the Publick, so much require it.

IF we would bear our Testimony for Christ, we must bear it against these Sins: by reverencing the Name of God, religiously observing the Lord's-Day, frequently and reverently attending upon the Ministry of the Word, and devoutly communicating at the Lord's-Table: by living soberly, and by being careful to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit. To practise these Duties, and conscientiously to oppose the Vices that are contrary to them, is giving a notable Testimony to Religion.

2. ANOTHER way in which we are to confess Christ, is by honouring his Members, relieving them as there is occasion, and giving all the Encouragement we are capable, to Works of Piety and Mercy. As to hate and persecute any of the Followers of Jesus Christ, meerly upon the score of differing Sentiments in Religion, is highly dishonourable and displeasing to him, and altogether

Phil. iv.  
18.

altogether unchristian; so to shelter them from the Malice and Rage of their Enemies, to relieve their Necessities, to preserve their Reputations, to vindicate their Fame from false Aspersions, and by all lawful Means to cherish, comfort, and countenance them; this, as St. Paul says, *is an Odour of a sweet Smell, a Sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.* What we do to the poor Members of Christ, or indeed to any of his Members, he resents as done to his own Person; for he dwells in them, and is in a sort represented by every one of them. As may be seen in that account which he himself gives of the Process of the great Day, in the Conclusion of the 25th Chapter of St.

Matt. xxv.  
40.

*Matthew's Gospel: In as much, says he, as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* To be charitable, obliging, and beneficent, and ready to every good Work, wherein the Honour of God, and the Interest of Religion is concerned; is the Character, the endearing Character, of St. Paul's good Man, for whom it is said *some would even dare to die.*

Rom. v.  
7.

3. REPROVING Sinners is another eminent Act of Confession. When we dare not join with them in their evil Courses, and are so far from seeming to do so, that we enter our Protests against such Proceedings, show our Dislike to them, reprehend the guilty, and, when it is in our power, restrain

restrain and punish them, this is complying with the Apostle's Exhortation: *Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.* Eph. v. Re-  
 proof, it must be owned, is one of the most ungrateful Parts of a Christian's Work, and it will try our Prudence as much as most things to manage it well: such is Men's Untowardness, and so soon do they give in-  
 to Passion, and angry Resentment. But difficult and unpleasing as it is, this is Work that must be done. And when milder and more gentle Methods, which are first to be tried, and Reproofs too, fail of reclaiming those, who for the present seem incorrigible in Vice; then we are, in Tenderness to them, and out of regard to the Welfare of the Community to which we belong, to have recourse to the civil Magistrate, and to endeavour in our places to bring such Offenders to Shame and Punishment, so far as the Crimes they are guilty of, come under the Cognisance of the Laws made for the Suppression of Immorality and Vice.

4. THE last Way I shall mention of confessing Christ, is by suffering for him. If we suffer for the Testimony of Jesus in our Liberties, or in our Estates, as most of the primitive Christians did, and many in later times have done: Or if it be but in our Names by Reproaches, if we suffer like Christians, we exhibit our Belief that God will be true to his Promises, and reward these

these Losses. But if God should call and enable us not only to endanger our Lives for the Name of the Lord Jesus; but even to seal the Testimony of our Lips with our Heart's Blood, rather than deny our Saviour: we hereby give the most costly and least questionable Evidence of our Sincerity, and bring the highest honour to God, and our Redeemer. Hence Custom hath obtained, that the Word *Martyr*, which in its first Signification is a common Name for all that bear witness to the Truth, should be appropriated to this one, and the most illustrious Order of Confessors. But I need not insist more largely on this Head, since we are in no visible Danger of suffering in the Cause of Religion, unless it be from the Reproaches of the Wicked, whose Reproaches are an Honour, and often turn to advantage; for God blesses us the more sometimes, when Men curse us, and because they do so. We live under a mild and gentle Administration, which maintainsto us our Rights and Privileges, religious as well as civil, and have abundant reason to own, and to bless God, that we are Subjects to the best of Kings, and Governments in the World. Yea, so happy are we, that I know not any thing, but a more thorough Reformation, could make us more so.

THUS far we have gone: I have shewn you what it is to confess Christ, and in how many

many Ways this may and ought to be done,  
And now I come,

III. To enforce the Duty from the Encouragement here given. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men; that's our Duty; the Motive to it follows, him will I also confess before my Father which is in Heaven.* Our Blessed Saviour hath in these Words closely connected our Interest with our Duty, and back'd it with an excellent and glorious Promise. He does not only give us leave to acknowledge him, but encourages us to it, not only with the Assurance of a kind Acceptance, but of Reward. Nor does he intend to put us off with some sorry Requital, but will afford us an ample Recompence. Perhaps you can see little Prospect of doing good by your Profession, and that all your Endeavours for others Reformation, are likely to be in vain. Well, be it so, tho' perhaps it may prove otherwise, yet Christ is so just that he will not break his Word, and suffer a good Action to which he hath promised his Blessing to go unrewarded; and he is so merciful, that he will not measure his Reward by the Success which your Care and Pains have had upon others, but by the good Intention from which they proceeded in yourselves. Good Men are dear to their Saviour now, he looks upon them with Approbation and Delight: he makes them his peculiar Care, and will not

deny them any thing that is good. *The*  
 Pf. xi. 7. *righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his*  
*Countenance doth behold the upright.* His  
 Face and Favour are ever towards Men of  
 this Character. He remembers their Ser-  
 vices so as to make them some suitable Re-  
 turns for them in this World. But be this  
 as it will, I mean, with respect unto the  
 Rewards of Religion in the present Life: if  
 we openly and honestly confess Christ be-  
 fore Men, we shall have a full Recompence  
 in a future State, which will shame all our  
 Losses and Sufferings for him, it will so far  
 exceed them. If Salvation can make us a-  
 mends, all is well; and if the Word of God  
 may stand for good Security, all is sure.  
 Happy it will be with us when we die, and at  
 the last great accounting Day, Jesus Christ  
 will mention our Names and Services with  
 Marks of Honour and Respect before his Fa-  
 ther, and that numerous Assembly of Angels  
 and Men which shall then be convened be-  
 fore him. " These, will he say, are the Per-  
 " sons whom I have redeemed with my  
 " Blood, I offered to be their Saviour, and  
 " they have accepted of me as such, upon  
 " my own Terms; they espoused my Cause  
 " and Interest, when they were in the World,  
 " and I now own them for mine, and will  
 " take them with me into Heaven: where  
 " I am, they shall be also, and partake with  
 " me of a Happiness perfect in its kind, and  
 " that shall never cease whilst God lives,  
 " and

“and Eternity can last.” The Prophet *Malachi* speaking of some Persons that stood up for God and Religion in a very corrupt Age, says, *Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his Name.* And the next Words are exceeding comfortable, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the Day when I make up my Jewels.* Oh what Encouragement is this to be religious! that a Life spent in the Service of Christ, and to his Glory here, shall end in Heaven at last.

SHOULD any of you make light of the Promises, and think the good things contained in them, too distant to have any great weight with you; I beseech you, bethink yourselves of the Threatnings denounced against those who deny the Lord Jesus. Besides the Verse following the Text, *But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven,* which are very awful Words; consider those of St. *Luke*: *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy Angels.* And those also, *If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him; but if we deny him, he will deny us.* A few Inferences, and I have done.

*Applic. I.* WE may all from hence learn our Duty, a Duty which we must perform, as ever we hope to find favour with God in the Hour of our Death, at the Judgment-Day, and for ever after. This is to confess Christ, which, as hath been explained, is to own his Truths and Ways, his Cause and Servants, against all the Opposition that is made to them by a perverse World. The Magistrate is here taught his Duty; and give me leave, Gentlemen, to mention it with all due Submission, you are by Office appointed to be Terrors to Evil-Doers, but a Praise and Encouragement to them that do well. The Honour of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Good of your Country, all loudly call upon you, faithfully to discharge the important Trust: and you cannot in any other way so effectually consult your own Honour, and promote your own best Happiness, as by countenancing Virtue, and discouraging the Vices of a sinful Age, in the wise Execution of the Laws that are made against them. May I be allowed to address myself to my Reverend Fathers, and Brethren in the Ministry. Our Duty is to live well, and to preach well. Thus much the World looks for and expects from us: and if these things are wanting, they will despise both us and our Profession. We are *to cry aloud, and spare not, to lift up our Voice like a Trumpet, to shew the People their Transgressions,*



gressions, and the House of Jacob their Sins. He spends his Days and Strength, and improves his Talents to the best advantage, that winneth Souls to Christ. This is the way to shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as Stars for ever and ever. Dan. xii. Nay,<sup>3.</sup> as the Sun in the Kingdom of our Father. If we do but sincerely endeavour the Conversion of Souls, our Reward will be much the same: *for tho' Israel be not gathered, we shall be saved.* Shall I address myself to Parents? here Reformation should begin, and it's in vain to expect a thorough Reformation of Manners, if Parents and Masters of Families neglect their Duty to those under their Instruction and Care, and instead of setting them a good Example, set them a bad one, which is too commonly the sad Case. It's true, a good Example in Parents and Masters has not always its desired and designed good Effect upon Children and Servants; we see Religion lie gasping and starving at some doors, where it used formerly to meet with the kindest, and most friendly Entertainment. But this is the most likely Method to mend the World; and the Magistrate's and Minister's Endeavours are likely to be to little purpose without it. *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Prov. xxii. It's certain he should not, and it is to be hoped, he will not forget the good Instructions that were early impress'd upon his Mind: Nay, he cannot  
so

so easily indulge himself in a Course of Wickedness, as one who hath been a Stranger to a pious Education. That is a very honourable Character, which God gives of *Abraham*, and is worthy the Imitation of every Christian Parent and Head of a Family.

Gen. xviii. *I know Abraham, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do Justice and Judgment.* It is said, to the everlasting Honour of *Cornelius*, that *he feared God with all his House.* Happy Family! whose Head does not only fear God, but all under his Roof? Did every Family do so, how nearly would this Earth resemble Heaven? And as for those who have voluntarily entred themselves into Societies for bettering a degenerate Age; yours is a very Praise-worthy Undertaking, and happy are you if you succeed in it: I doubt not but you will think your Cost and Pains well bestow'd if this be the Case, and all good Men will think so too. A bare harmless Profession in you is not enough, nor should it be thought sufficient in any, because Christ requires more, tho' even this were to be wish'd for in all. Your Business is to be active for God and Religion, your Discouragements in a Work of this kind are considerable, but your Encouragements are greater still; which leads to a second Inference.

2. WE hence see our Encouragement. By standing up for the Cause of Religion,  
you

you will secure, if sincere, the Peace and Comfort of your own Minds, which is an invaluable Treasure: no rejoicing like that which is the Produce of a good Conscience; you hereby recommend yourselves to the Favour and Affection, to the Love and Esteem of all who are truly good, you have the entire Consent of the best Men in the World to your Conduct, tho' perhaps not of the most. It is a very honourable thing to be a Professor of Religion, there is something in it very august, and that commands Respect from all, as ungentle and unfashionable as some may reckon it. And what do you know but God, in answer to your Prayers and Endeavours to serve him, may have kept off such sweeping Judgments as would have ruin'd all, and involved your Persons and Estates too, in the common Desolation? The World is not sensible how much they owe to the sincere Professors of Religion; if they were, they would treat them in a better Manner. Besides, you have the Approbation of God and Christ Jesus; you are sure of a publick Acknowledgment at the great Day, from the Judge of the whole Earth, and of being happy to Eternity: and this is more than all the rest; nay, and infinitely more than all other Encouragements and Advantages whatsoever. To conclude,

3. LET us see to it, that our Profession proceeds from a Principle of serious Piety; otherwise whatever good Effects our Endeavours

Yours

*A SERMON to the Societies, &c.*

vours for others Reformation may have upon them, they will be lost with respect unto ourselves. To this end, let us pray to God that he would put his Fear into our Hearts, and write his Law upon our Minds: Let us eye his Providence and Grace, and beg of him to give us Wisdom and Discretion, in our Christian Course; and to encrease both our Holiness and Usefulness in Life; and that when he calls us out of this vain, sinful World, it may be to the World of perfect Purity, Peace, and Joy. *Now to him who hath loved us, and died to wash us from our Sins in his own Blood; who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before his Father with exceeding great Joy: even to the Lamb that sitteth upon the Throne; be ascribed throughout all the Churches, Glory and Honour, Salvation and Blessing, for ever and for ever. Amen and Amen.*

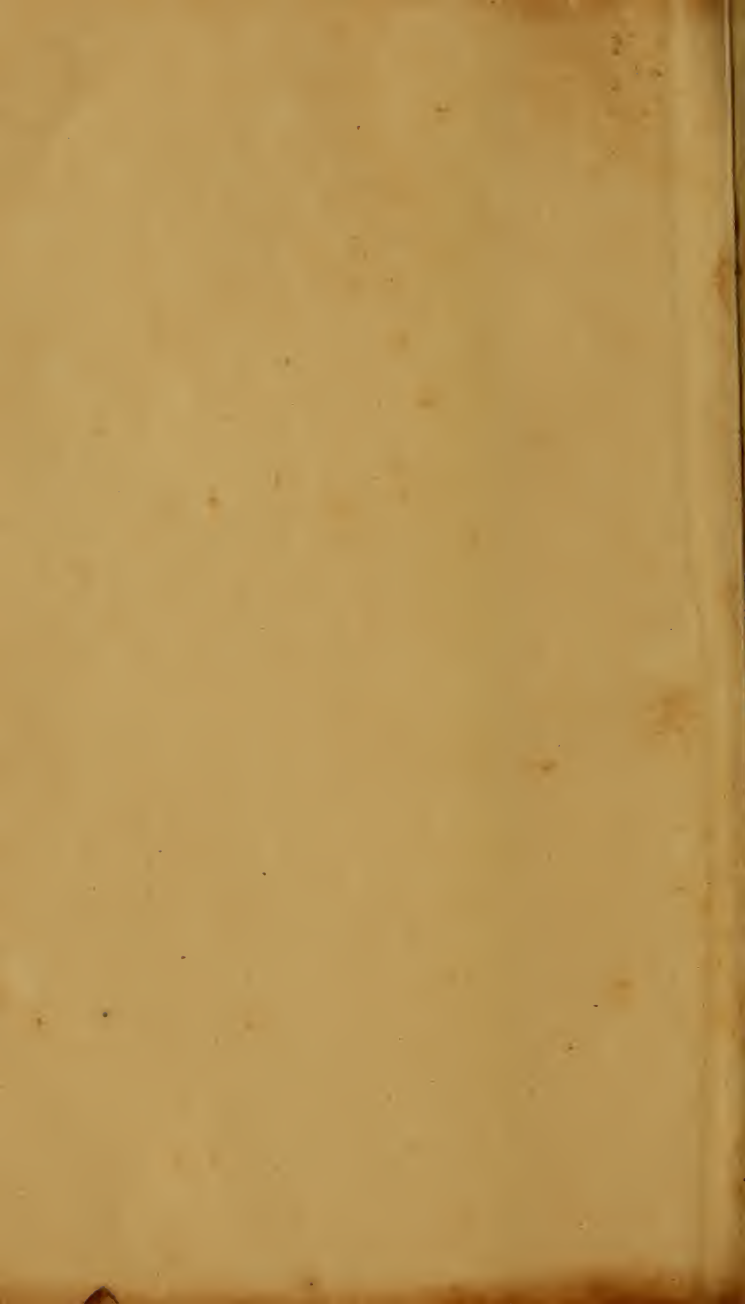
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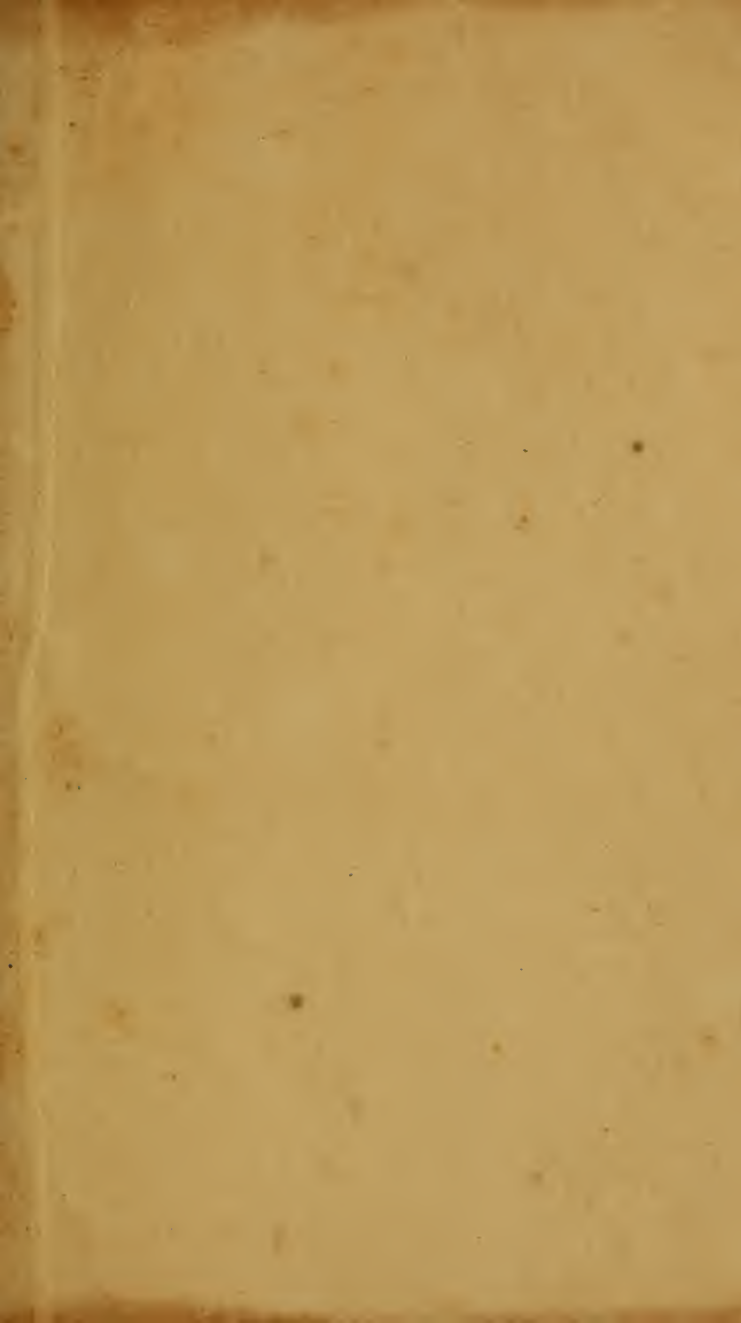
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